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INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Written statement* submitted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 January 2002]

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*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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ENG

Honor Killing (Karo-Kari) in Pakistan

1. Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1989. Despite that, there is a very high level of violence against girls and women in the country. Judging from the increased number of honour killings, it is clear that the Government of Pakistan has failed completely to address this major violation of women's' rights.

2. According to the findings of Human Rights and Legal Aid Centre in Karachi, in the first three months of 2001, 120 Pakistani women were murdered in the name of Honor Killing. The majority of women were shot to death. Others were axed, burnt and clubbed to death. Those who kill in this way are called Ghairatmand (those possessing honor) and there is no grief permitted in the victim's family. The victims are condemned for good. That is why the custom takes place overtly and brutally. The police do not intervene in cases of Honor Killing for it is recognized as a private family matter. The killers act under the 'traditional' institution of Jirga, which protects criminals who victimize innocent women and men, first accusing them of adultery and then slaughtering them. Significantly, not a single perpetrator has ever been put to trial. Because of this pathetic indifference of state agencies and successive governments to this heinous crime, there has been an increase in incidents.

3. By way of example, Perviaz Gujar was kidnapped, tortured and finally murdered in the name of 'honor'. Perviaz was not from the majority Suddhan tribe of his region, and as a member of a minority group he was refused permission to marry his chosen love, Raita. The couple, however, managed to have a secret marriage. During this period Raita became pregnant. Haji Mohammad Yaqoob Khan and other relatives of Raita made it a question of their honor to kidnap Perviaz and torture him for three days. He escaped and fled to his home, but early next morning one of Haji Yaqoob's relatives, Ashraf, came to Perviaz's house and took him outside at gunpoint, where he was murdered. No one was allowed to provide him with any medical assistance. This is not the end, however, but the beginning of the barbarism in the name of 'honor' that the Suddhan tribesmen have planned. They intend not only to kill other relatives of the deceased but are also determined to murder Raita, who is pregnant and whose killing will be a dual murder. Such incidents of kidnapping, murder and torture are features of the region, however none of these crimes are registered by the police or reported by the press because of pressure from leaders of the majority tribe.

4. Given this increasing violence against women and some men, and the failure of the Government of Pakistan to address the issue of Honor Killing, the Asian Legal Resource Centre demands that:

   - Existing international commitments, including CEDAW, be translated into national legislation;

   - Existing domestic laws be brought into line with international human rights

standards;

- Law enforcement agencies be educated on their implementation;

- Laws be strictly applied without distinction;

- A national committee be appointed both to monitor cases of violations and to advise the government on the implementation of existing laws; and,

5. A progra.n be initiated to educate the public on the ssue of Honor Killing, since no long-term success can be expected without attitudinal change.